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crown of the affected plant, and frequently occur an inch or two up on the stem. Though usually small, or in an irregular divided mass, they may be round and unbroken, and three or four inches in diameter. The interior of the gall is composed of small, irregular cavities in the hypertrophied tissue, the chambers being filled with masses of brown resting spores about forty micro-millimeters in diameter.

A more detailed account of the disease as it occurs in California will be published shortly.

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June 2, 1909

THE WEST INDIAN SEAL AT THE AQUARIUM

THE New York Aquarium received on June 14, 1909, an adult male and three yearling specimens of the rare West Indian seal (*Monachus tropicalis*). One of the latter was in a weak condition and died the day after arrival. The others are apparently doing well. The specimens were procured from a dealer in live turtles at Progreso, Yucatan, who reported the species as a great rarity. They were presumably captured at either the Triangle or the Alacran islets in the Gulf of Campeachy, the only known resorts of the species at the present time, so far as I am aware.

They are probably the only specimens of this nearly extinct species now living in captivity. Its original range included the coasts of Cuba, Haiti, Jamaica and the Bahamas. For the last half century it has apparently been restricted to the islands of Yucatan. It was well known to the sailors of Columbus and was later the basis of a seal fishery.

In SCIENCE for April 13, 1906, I recorded the killing of a specimen at Key West, Florida, on February 26, 1906. The species had not been seen in Florida for about thirty years.

The New York Aquarium received two specimens in 1897, one of which lived in the aquarium until 1903. Both of these animals had the singular habit of filling their cheeks with water and blowing it suddenly and with considerable force into the faces of visitors leaning over the pool. It will be interesting to discover whether the specimens now in the

building develop this trick, which for years excited the amusement, and sometimes the wrath, of visitors. Unlike the other Phocidæ kept on exhibition here, *Monachus* is noisy, the young often roaring harshly.

C. H. TOWNSEND

NEW YORK AQUARIUM

SCIENTIFIC BOOKS

Scientific Papers. By SIR GEORGE HOWARD DARWIN. Cambridge, at the University Press. Vol. I., pp. xiv + 459; Vol. II., pp. xvi + 514.

The task of the reviewer who undertakes the consideration of a republication of matter which has been for some years before the public in an accessible form, is not particularly easy. He may, of course, take refuge in statements more or less detailed of the contents of the volumes before him and say little more than the intelligent reader can glean by turning over the pages himself. Or he may write a few paragraphs on the history of the subjects treated, showing the author's relation thereto and his place in their development. More often he seizes a few points of a controversial character and in discussing them simply adds to the literature of the subject. No one of these methods appears to be satisfactory from the point of view of the reader. Brief reviews not intended for serious study, although they may be the result of such study, should, it seems, be written chiefly to save time and labor for the reader and perhaps to express the opinions of the reviewer, since in scientific journals at least the editorial "we" has ceased to be even a disguised fiction. Such reviews thus necessarily pass into the class of ephemeral productions which may have value at the time of publication, but which only add to the labor of future students if they contain matter belonging properly to the development of the subject.

If a writer accepts this view and takes to the criticism of matters beyond the mechanical detail of form and arrangement, an estimate of the writer and his work, however dangerous, is necessarily the main topic. After all, such criticism is merely a single opinion as to whether the attitude of the scholar towards his